

2  
 ANNOUNCED  
 ON PAGE 3

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR  
 18 February 1981

## How Reagan's six-unit Cabinet works on issues

Debate groups would begin  
functioning in coming weeks

By Godfrey Sperling Jr.  
 Staff correspondent of  
 The Christian Science Monitor

Washington  
 Cabinet government, Reagan style, is  
 beginning to take final shape.

First and foremost in the present Reagan  
 blueprint is to bring Cabinet members  
 together in six separate groups to discuss,  
 debate, and make recommendations in sub-  
 ject areas that pertain to each.

The idea, the White House says, stems  
 from the Ford administration, when an eco-  
 nomic policy group within the Cabinet proved  
 most effective in the governing process.

This subject-matter approach divides the  
 Cabinet into six councils:

- Natural resources and the environment.
- Food and agriculture.
- Commerce and trade.
- Human resources.
- The National Security Council (already  
 established by law).
- Economic affairs.

The plan still needs the approval of the  
 various Cabinet members — but the White  
 House expects it to be implemented, perhaps  
 with one or two more groups added, within a  
 couple of weeks.

The proposal is being billed as an "alterna-  
 tive" to an earlier Reagan idea of following  
 his California approach to government in  
 which he met daily with a small, select group  
 of top-level appointees.

That idea, floated by the Reagan people  
 during the transition, soon ran into obstacles,  
 particularly from incoming Chief of Staff  
 James Baker. Mr. Baker said he thought such  
 a "supercabinet" would irritate those in the  
 Cabinet who were not included.

But some White House "insiders" say  
 Reagan still will have a handful of Cabinet  
 members that he meets with on a day-to-day  
 basis — simply because this is the way he  
 likes to work. Those seen as most likely to be

included in this inner circle are Secretary of  
 State Alexander M. Haig Jr., Secretary of  
 Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of  
 Treasury Donald T. Regan, Attorney General  
 William French Smith, and CIA Director  
 William J. Casey.

"There will be a supercabinet without that  
 name being applied to it," one administration  
 source says. He says it would "emerge," that  
 it would not be "structured."

Longtime observers of the presidency are  
 dubious that Reagan will be able to make  
 cabinet government truly work — at least for  
 very long.

Other presidents have structured their ad-  
 ministrations in ways to try to ensure that  
 their Cabinet members not only had frequent  
 access to the Oval Office but also were the  
 ones to be relied on principally for the recom-  
 mendations that were turned into presidential  
 initiatives or programs.

But before long top aides in the White  
 House, because of their location right at the  
 elbow of the President, became the chief  
 advisers.

But Reagan insists he is going to use his  
 Cabinet as the principal instrument of gov-  
 ernment — not his White House team.

Already he has shown that he means to  
 carry out this commitment to Cabinet su-  
 premacy by making his foreign affairs ad-  
 viser in the White House solely a  
 "coordinator" on policymaking. Secretary of  
 State Haig has been given assurance that he  
 alone will be the shaper of foreign policy.  
 Thus there will be no Zbigniew Brzezinski in  
 the Reagan White House vying with the secre-  
 tary of state as the former national security  
 adviser did in the Carter administration.